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FOOD AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR LIBERIA (FED)

MONTHLY REPORT: APRIL 2012



APRIL 2012

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FOOD AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (FED) PROGRAM FOR LIBERIA

MONTHLY REPORT: APRIL 1-30, 2012

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COVER PHOTO: Harvesting of Lettuce at FED Demonstration Site in Kakata,
Margibi County

DISCLAIMER

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ACRONYMS

BRAC	Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee
BWI	Booker T. Washington Institute
CDS	Curriculum Development Specialist
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEE	Initial Environmental Examination
IFDC	International Fertilizer Developmental Center
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
IO	International Organization
ISFM	Integrated Soil Fertility Management
IT	Information Technology
LEAP	Liberia Energy Assistance Program
LEAP	Local Enterprise Assistance Programme
LMA	Liberia Marketing Association
LTTA	Long Term Technical Assistant
MDF	Market Development Fund
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
NCSCC	National Cassava Sector Coordinating Committee
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistance
UDP	Urea Deep Placement
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
VES	Vocational Education Specialist
WAT	West Africa Telecommunications

SUMMARY

April 2012 was a busy month for the FED team, with accomplishments made in the areas of training, continuing Fed's operational set-up in the counties and Monrovia, and implementation of activities in various project components.

A variety of trainings occurred during the month. Three Extension Agents in the peri-urban areas were trained in crop planning, input procurement, and testing of soil water. A treadle irrigation demonstration was conducted in Nimba County and was attended by 150 farmers. FED, along with the National Cassava Sector, also led a 2 day Business Management Skills training in Monrovia for SMEs working in the cassava value chain.

Vegetable production at the Kakata field demonstration site continued during the month of April. Lettuce was harvested from the demonstration site was given free of charge to the Booker Washington Institute (BWI), The Children Future Orphanage Home and the C.H. Rennie Hospital all in Kakata, Margibi County.

The long-term Enterprise Development Specialist, Mark Nolan, joined the Monrovia FED Team on March 20, 2012. He died unexpectedly of natural causes on April 5, 2012. Upon his arrival, Mark immediately began working with a variety of famers groups, local cassava producers, and many others. He made many valuable contributions in a short period of time and the whole FED team is mourning this tragic loss.

The Market Development Fund (MDF) Acting Manager, Jessica Stretz, arrived in Monrovia for a 4 month STTA that will focus on overseeing the day-to day operations and management of the MDF. The Acting MDF Manager will meet with potential partners and collaborate with technical staff across components to ensure disbursement and management of the funds.

The FED IT Department successfully set up two field offices in Grand Bassa and Lofa counties respectively. They setup the network printer, cabled and wireless router, setup the desktop computers, and provided other support as required.

USAID Liberia's Food and Enterprise Development (FED) Program is being implemented to achieve the following component objectives:

- Component-1: Increase agricultural productivity and profitability, and improve human nutrition;
- Component-2: Stimulate private enterprise growth and investment; and
- Component-3: Build local technical and managerial human resources to sustain and expand the accomplishments achieved under objectives one and two.

COMPONENT ONE: INCREASED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

Task 1.3 Input Supply System Interventions

During the month of April 2012 farmers' cooperatives and associations were identified in Lofa and Nimba Counties. Sites for FED activities including demonstrations on integrated soil fertility management (ISFM) and urea deep placement (UDP) were selected in Bong, Nimba, Lofa and Gran Bassa. The Table below summarizes where FED will be working and in which value chains:

County	District	Value chain
Lofa	Foya, Voinjama and Kolahun	Rice
	Salaye and Zorzor	Cassava
Bong	Salala and Panta	Rice
	Suakoko and Kpai	
Nimba	Garr-Bain	Rice

In Lofa County, 3 Districts were visited and 10 sites selected. The sites are easily accessible and farmers' associations are actively working in lowland rehabilitation for irrigated rice production. Farming activities are highly intensive upland, and the FED project will need to begin demonstrations and training on ISFM for MoA Extension Agents, international organizations' field staff, and farmers associations.

Major Conclusions

The information gathered covered:

- i. The collection of geographical information to map out the locations and irrigation schemes visited;
- ii. A rapid assessment of the irrigation layout;
- iii. A rapid assessment of crop management in the lowlands and the vegetable production schemes by women's groups;
- iv. Group discussions to better understand the issues the groups and associations are faced with regarding lowland rice production, what kind of support from international organizations is currently being provided, management of the irrigation structure, and access to farm inputs.

The findings suggest that:

- i. Irrigation structures are poorly managed: Poor maintenance of the dam, headers and canals, leads to poor water control, water logging, iron toxicity and nitrogen deficiency altogether;
- ii. Crop yields are still very low (1.14-6.3 Mt/ha) as a result of poor water, weed, crop disease, and soil fertility management in the lowlands;

- iii. Extension support is still weak and international NGOs have had difficulties in capacity building activities. This has led to continuous dependency on free seed, fertilizer, tools, farm machinery for land preparation and rice processing, and limited capacity among farmers associations for organizing themselves and getting access to farm inputs, developing local savings schemes and accessing micro-credit.
- iv. The women's groups involved in pepper production have limited support from their communities and from development partners. The community has allocated land to the women, but it's far from the village and difficult to access. The pepper seeds they are using are bought from the local market and are not certified. They have no equipment for chemical treatment of the crops in case of pest or disease outbreak.
- v. The cooperative visited at Bardeku/Voinjama is not functioning because of a lack of leadership and management capacity. Internal problems of leadership and weak performance need to be resolved.

The following actions will be taken by the FED project from April-September 2012:

- i. Coordination and supervision of swamp rehabilitation operations in collaboration with development partners in the target Counties and Districts: 6 in Lofa; 6 in Nimba; 6 in Bong; and 6 in Margibi;
- ii. Training of up to 600 farmers on ISFM and UDP, and demonstrations to address iron toxicity and nitrogen deficiencies in the lowlands, and to reduce upland exposure to erosion with appropriate farming practices;
- iii. Organization of a pilot demand-driven agro- inputs voucher workshop to create awareness of agro- inputs markets opportunities;
- iv. Coordination and supervision of capacity building activities for extension personnel and development partners in the target Counties and Districts.

Activity 1.3a: Improving Access to Quality Agro-inputs

A one day workshops scheduled in Monrovia on May 2, 2012 with agro-inputs dealers, seed suppliers, farmers' cooperatives and associations, the MoA, the banks and MFIs to develop guidelines for an action plan concerning agro-input supply interventions in 6 counties of Liberia: Bong, Nimba, Lofa and Grand Bassa, Montserrado and Margibi.

Three questions will be addressed within the framework of input supply interventions:

- 1. What are challenges faced by the actors of the agro-inputs supply chain for knowing and addressing local demand from farmers' cooperatives and associations?

2. What is the government doing to strengthen research and extension for supporting agro-inputs dealers, farmers' cooperatives and associations for inputs supply, distribution and use?
3. What do agro-inputs dealers and seed suppliers know about USAID regulations and procedures, environmental issues associated with agro-inputs purchase and distribution, tendering processes, and alignment with Government regulations and procedures?

Objectives of the workshop:

The objective of the workshop is to develop an integrated strategy and action plan for input supply interventions during the life of the FED program. The integrated strategy is expected to move the rice, cassava, vegetables and goats value chains from their current low productivity state to a higher level, based on higher involvement of the private sector, and generating higher returns for all participants.

Production and productivity are low, access to agro-inputs and marketing mechanisms are inefficient. However, there is a lot of potential for improving access to agro-inputs for scaling-up efficiency and effectiveness of key actors in Fed's four target value chains.

Almost all agricultural inputs dealers are now based in Monrovia. There are about 4-5 today including: i) MIAGRO (Nigeria based Company); ii) WIENCO (Ghana based Company); iii) GREEN FIELD (Monrovia based Dealer); and iv) GRO GREEN (Monrovia based Dealer).

There are many seed suppliers which also provide some other inputs: i) Arjay Farms; ii) AIIC; iii) and Green Farms to name a few. In the Counties only one agro-inputs supplier, ANARCO was located in Ganta/Nimba County.

Our findings during field visits suggest that:

1. Three categories of actors are involved in the agro-inputs supply chain: i) Agro-input dealers based in Monrovia with limited involvement with farmers' associations and cooperatives at the County or at community levels. They basically provide inputs to international organizations and NGOs which in turn, distribute to farmers' associations and cooperatives directly or through the MoA, free of charge; ii) Agro-inputs suppliers based at county levels in the towns, with diversified activities (Agro-inputs supply is just one of them); and iii) Agro-inputs distributors who go to the villages on motor bikes or bush taxis on local market days with highly diversified goods to sell to villagers in the communities (they basically sell seeds and tools, chemicals are rarely ever found).
2. From the point of view of the agro-inputs dealers, farmers do not know very much about crop management and chemicals. The ones they get from IO's and NGOs through the MoA are sometimes farmers re-selling free FAO and WFP inputs in the local market at low prices because of their poor quality due to improper handling and storage.

3. It is also evident that agro-inputs dealers do not know very much about USAID procedures and regulations concerning inputs supply, and safe use. So far, their interventions have been limited to addressing purchase requests from NGOs and the MoA.

Expected results: Two results are expected from this workshop:

1. To develop a FED action plan for agro-input supply interventions in 6 counties of Liberia: Bong, Nimba, Lofa and Grand Bassa, Montserrado and Margibi.
2. To define concrete actions at each level of the agro-inputs supply chain:
 - Fairness in the GoL application of taxation and inputs quality regulations;
 - Agro-input dealers' interventions and investment in demonstrations and publicity in the counties and communities;
 - Seed suppliers for upgrading their businesses and improving seed quality and expanding work with out-growers;
 - Research for providing support to seed producers with respect to access to improved varieties for rice and cassava;
 - MoA for upgrading information support to farmers' cooperatives, associations, and also the private sector.

Activity 1.3b: Testing and Introduction of New Technologies

- The SOW for a range of IFDC-STTA has been submitted to DAI for review and will be sent to USAID for approval once finalized.

Outcome(s):

- Two counties visited;
- SOW for IFDC STTA developed and submitted to DAI for review and will be sent to USAID for approval;
- Ten Districts identified and about 200 hectares of swamp land evaluated for ISFM and UDP demonstrations involving capacity building for 700 farmers in Lofa and Nimba counties;
- A seminar is being organized to move forward with setting up an input supply action plan and strategy to facilitate access to farm inputs for farmers' cooperatives and associations.

The following activities will be carried out to make a quick assessment of Agro-inputs demand. They involve:

- Site selection and evaluation in Grand Bassa County;
- Identification of farmers' cooperatives and associations in Bong County.

Task 1.5 Increased Production and Profitability of Quality Rice

All of the tasks planned under the rice sub-component will be implemented during the coming rain lowland rice season. Significant time has thus far, been devoted to planning for the start-up of rice value chain activities, which will include:

- Hiring of six Extension Agents, one local rice specialist, and one expat rice specialist
- Identification of farmer groups on the basis of pre-determined selection criteria
- Survey of existing rice production practices, problems and available inputs to determine knowledge gaps and develop a plan to address them
- Procurement of seed and other rice inputs for farmer training
- Development of the farmer training curriculum in rice production
- Training of extension staff in rice production
- Training of farmers in rice production
- Production of 10 rotary rice weeders for demonstration purposes
- Obtaining pro forma invoices for Kubota and IRRI hydrotillers for eventual demonstration purposes

Outcomes:

The recruitment process has started with interviews conducted, references checked, and biodata forms completed for the three extension agents and one rice specialist identified. Training of extension staff in rice production is scheduled to start in mid-May.

In Bong, Grand Bassa, and Lofa counties, contact has been made with MoA Extension Agents and District Agricultural Officers. FED and GoL staff has met with farmer groups to explain the objectives of FED and to learn more about the farmers' priority interventions and activities.

FED and MoA extension staff will be trained in improved rice production techniques and technologies based on a course comprising as many as eight modules (e.g., planning, budgeting, seedling production, land preparation, etc.). Participatory training of farmers associations will be carried out concurrently. In addition to training in improved practices, farmers will be introduced to technologies that will reduce production and processing labor bottlenecks and will increase yields. Some of these technologies include rotary rice weeders, power tillers/levelers, impact rice de-hullers, and rice dryers.

Task 1.6 Increased Production and Profitability of Quality Cassava

During the month of April, planning for cassava activities continued. Cassava activities will be coordinated with rice and other Component 1 activities.

Furthermore, specific short-term consultancies were planned and SOWs developed for the provision of technical assistance to cassava post-harvest activities. Eric Nzokou, a new staff member on FED, will train staff and at least one local metal worker, in the manufacturing, use, and maintenance of a fiber-discharge cassava mill developed in Cameroon and used widely there for the grinding of cassava and

corn. The production of a portable version will also be explored. This STTA is expected to be implemented in June.

In addition, LSU's David Picha will assess the post-harvest needs of cassava to determine technically appropriate and economically feasible techniques and technologies and estimated current losses. He is expected to arrive on FED in July or August.

Finally, FED Enterprise Development staff will assess the viability of mobile cassava graters in use in Grand Cape Mount County that have reportedly been imported from Sierra Leone. Depending on the findings of this study, this technology may have widespread potential in the FED project area.

The Nzokou and Picha STTAs will be implemented in the summer of 2012. The cassava grader study is planned for May 2012.

Task 1.7 Peri-urban Vegetable Production

Activity 1.7b: Capacity building

- In April, 3 extension agents were trained on crop planning, input procurement, and testing of soil water to determine available nutrients in the soil. A similar training was provided for two of the rainy season vegetable groups (Mount Barclay and Cocoa factory) benefitting 40 farmers (31 female and 9 male);
- 14 groups were identified in Montserrado and Margibi counties for the rainy season vegetable production. These groups have prepared a total of 7.54 hectares of land for the demonstration of vegetable production (see table 1 below);
- Types of vegetable to be grown at the demonstration plots include: chili, onions, water melons, carrots, okra, collard greens, eggplant, and cover crops;
- Trials at demonstration plots will take into consideration the use of improved farming tools. These assorted tools were procured and distributed to demonstration plots and remains ongoing;
- The Ganta metal workshop organized and held in collaboration with the FED project, conducted 10 treadle irrigation demonstrations in Nimba County. These demonstrations were attended by more than 150 farmers. As Liberia's dry season ends, few pump sales will likely be recorded at this time. Traditionally, most irrigation equipment in West Africa is purchased at the beginning of the dry season between the months of September and January.
- Demonstrations of other vegetable production and processing equipment – tube wells and dryers – are tentatively planned for May and June. Exact timing of the work on the tube wells will depend on when the IEE is approved by USAID.
- Work continues to establish demonstration plots on the 14 groups which are on target to be completed before the rains. The work has been severely hampered by the dry conditions and lack of irrigation water. However, inputs including seed and fertilizer are now to hand. Pest pressures are significant, but it is believed that, when approved, the agrochemicals requested under the PERSUAP application should address the crop protection problems as identified to date.

- Formal training of the FED field staff in an 8 module course on horticultural production has begun and up to module 4 has been completed. Concurrent participatory training of farmers associations has also begun (Figures 2 & 3). The first two modules are focused on introductory planning and budgeting.

Activity 1.7c: Commercial linkages

- FED held meetings with Church Aid Liberia, a certified importer of viable vegetable seeds for possible collaboration with FED for the provision of vegetable seeds. The request for collaboration was accepted and varieties of vegetable seeds will be collected by FED from Church Aid on April 27th.
- FED met with Wienco Liberia, a dealer of agricultural inputs and chemicals supplies to access the range of chemicals available for fertilizing vegetables and controlling persistent pest and diseases in accordance with the FED PERSUAP. A MOU is under development for possible collaboration between FED and Weinco.
- Liberian soils and crop requirements for fertilizers based on soil testing has already begun. Fertilizers available in Liberia are short of a number of critical plant nutrients;
- The pests and diseases identified in Liberia are complex (See Figure 1). The first identification of broad mite in Liberia has been made. This pest is estimated to reduce the potential yield of chili crops in the country by more than 50% , but no management systems are in place – simply because the problem has been misidentified until this point in time (Figures 4 and 5).

Trials are being planned for tropically adapted cultivars of various vegetables, as well as a selection of Liberian land races of bitter ball and chili.

Preliminary planning has begun, including the development of basic training materials in crop planning and budgeting. More advanced training modules are being planned for selected farmers and input providers from April through July.

Training of extension staff on the remaining modules will be completed in May. Seeds for cover crops and virus resistant/tolerant chili's are being sourced. A vigorous pest and disease survey of peri-urban crops is underway with the planned first edition of a handbook for all field staff in the MoA and other organizations working in this area within Liberia to be ready by mid-May. The handbook will be updated on a regular basis as a FED-led initiative of the Liberian Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Working Group.



Photo1: Monitoring of insects on peri-urban vegetables



Photo2: Training at Mount Barclay



Photo3: FED Extension staff with True Satisfaction Farmers Group – site selection for coming rainy seasons cropping



Photo 4: Severe broad mite damage to younger leaves in chili (Bong county, Liberia)



Photo 5: Distortion in the growing tip of chili caused by broad mite infestation (Liberia)

Task 1.8: Goat Interventions

Assessments of the goat value chain in Nimba, Bomi and Lofa counties were carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, USDA/Land O'Lakes, and FED was completed in April... The joint assessment involved a nine day tour of the counties, including visits to all strategic border entry points with neighboring countries. The assessment completed reviews of current situations regarding livestock interventions such as restocking efforts, vaccination programs, disease incidence, livestock importation procedures, quarantine/inspection procedures, and slaughter facilities and practices. This information will be utilized to determine the most strategic interventions for both the FED Program and the USDA/Land O'Lakes program in order to avoid overlap.

FED Harvests First Exotic Crop from its Demonstration Site

The Food and Enterprise Development (FED) Program for Liberia harvested its first crop from the project pilot demonstration site for exotic crops in Kakata, Margibi County on April 20, 2012.

This demonstration site was established by FED and the Ministry of Agriculture in January 2012 to show case to other agriculture donors, NGOs, potential farmers, and the business sector that these exotic crops can be grown in Liberia. The crops grown include red and white onion, lettuce, and long Cayenne pepper.

During the harvest, the Margibi County Agriculture Coordinator, Mr. Willie F. Cooper was impressed with the harvest and recommended that FED to carry out similar activities in its operational corridor to introduce to other farmers the importance of growing these unique crops.

Over 110 lbs. of lettuce harvested; FED provided 20lbs of Lettuce to the Booker T. Washington Institute, C. H. Rennie Hospital, and the Children Future Program Orphanage Home in Kakata, Margibi County.



Photo 6: FED Senior Policy Advisor, Max Goldensohn, gives 20lbs of Lettuce to C.H. Rennie Hospital



Photo 7: Senior Policy Advisor, Max, Goldensohn, gives 20lbs of Lettuce to Children Future Program

COMPONENT TWO: STIMULATE PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

A two days Business Skills Training for Farmer Associations was conducted in Gbarnga, Bong County from April 2nd and 3rd, 2012. This workshop was designed for individual farmers, farmer groups and associations, and women's groups who are already working in agriculture production and looking at managing profitable agriculture enterprises. At this training there were 8 groups represented from 5 Districts within Bong County and 1 group from Lofa County, Voinjama District.

On April 4-5, 2012 a two days Business Management Skills Training for SMEs working in the Cassava Value Chain was held jointly with the National Cassava Sector at the Royal Hotel in Sinkor, Monrovia. The workshop was conducted by Miss Agatha Johnson, a M/SME Training Specialist and the late Mark Nolan, Enterprise Development Specialist FED. This workshop covered the following:

- Overview of a business plan
- Analyzing the market and developing a marketing plan
- Developing the operations plan
- Developing the financial plan
- Writing the business plan

The objective of the SOW was for the M/SME Training Specialist to assess capacity gaps and design a program of business services trainings for M/SMEs and business associations in the selected value chains.

Discussions were held on separate dates with Ame Atsu David, from the National Cassava Sector and Tupin K. Morgan, Managing Director of Linking Farmers to Markets. Those discussions were geared towards gathering information on the cassava value chain within the different markets around Monrovia.

Cassava value chain consultant, Duke Burruss, and Kristin Oplanick worked with the Enterprise Development section to conduct cassava field assessments. They held meetings and had discussions with the President of Liberia Marketing Association (LMA) and superintendents at the different market sites. The objectives of this field visits were to gather information on:

- Growers
- Processors

- Traders
- Input Providers
- Transportation and what are those challenges they are faced with.

Task 2.2 Access to Finance

Achievement

Mary Miller, Value Chain Finance STTA, and Jetty Smith-Carter, conducted an Access to Finance study. The purpose of this study was to assess the current availability of finance, particularly from financial institutions, to serve FED project clients, as well as to assess the bankability of clients, and their potential to access credit. Based on these investigations, the goal is to develop an action plan of steps that FED can undertake to increase the availability of finance.

In addition to reviewing other meeting notes and reports, the work in this study comprised interviews with banks and MFIs that are considered to have some interest in agricultural and agri-business finance, to determine their current status and activities, and to investigate potential for joint work. The study team also visited several project clients, including farmers, processors, and a farmer cooperative.

The banks and MFIs that are the most likely candidates for joint work in finance are:

Access Bank – commercial bank that operates as an MFI; is expanding into agricultural lending (part of a Nigeria-based multibank network; IFC is an investor).

Afriland Bank – commercial bank that is particularly focused on rural and agricultural finance, is already directly dealing with farmers and agribusinesses; has a workable model for developing local village savings and loan associations that could serve project smallholder clients, first VSLA to be active in July 2012 (part of multibank network started in Cameroon).

BRAC – Includes both an MFI with 30 branches in all counties where FED works which has already reached 24,000 micro clients and 1,000 small business clients, and an NGO that offers agricultural extension services.

Other potential MFI partners are LEAD, Liberty Finance, and LEAP, although the latter two are in the process of restructuring. LEAD has experimented in agricultural lending, but in general the MFIs have made traditional microcredit loans, which call for weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly payments, and are not tied to agricultural cycles.

A major issue in Liberia is the attitude by borrowers of all sizes that loans are hand-outs and do not have to be repaid, apparently a legacy of post-war assistance. This behavior, as well as the generally weak condition of the economy, mean that the banks and MFIs are dealing with large problem loan portfolios.

At present there generally seems to be little borrower bankability. This can be developed by increasing the profitability of borrowers, ensuring that they have operating experience, maintaining records of performance, and particularly have the willingness to repay loans.

In the short run FED can be building relationships with financial institutions by sharing information and inviting bankers to events, both to introduce the project and its clients, as well as to educate the bankers. In the longer run FED can look to develop partnerships with financial institutions, as client needs emerge – e.g., support development of a branch office in an underserved area, partially fund expansion of an equipment leasing firm into the Liberian market.

The Recommendations from this report will be consolidated into a series of Action Steps for FED to follow.

Task 2.4 Use of ICTs in Stimulating Liberian Agri-Business

The Information and Communication Technology, STTA arrived at the end April 2012 and carried out the following activities:

- Visited and had meeting with Bong County Marketing Association Superintendent (Viola Cooper), District Agriculture Officers, and DAI M&E Officer for Bong, James Dorbor Sao, Station Manager, Radio Bongesse on ICT tools and potential areas of collaboration;
- Met with Farm Builders (Thad Kerosky) on ICT tools and potential areas of collaboration;
- Reviewed web/database development proposals and re-advertised ToR for media content developer.

Detailed report will follow at the end of assignment.

COMPONENT THREE: BUILD LOCAL HUMAN CAPACITY

Task 3.1 Creating Centers of Excellence

On April 10, 2012, the Vocational Educational Specialist traveled to BWI, Kakata with Mr. Matthew Zoegar, FED IT Manager to:

- Discuss the provision of office space for FED at the BWI Campus for the Vocational Education Specialist and Curriculum Development Specialist;
- Measure the distances between the four buildings for possible IT linkage on the campus;
- Work on the plan of action for the Agriculture Department with the administration of BWI.

The FED team met and discussed with Mr. Jacob Swee, the head of the BWI Agriculture Department, the need for the VES to spend a few days on the BWI Campus to work on a plan of action for the agriculture department with the Principal and the head of the Agriculture Department. After their discussions, Mr. Swee assigned two students and one of his staff to help Mr. Zoegar measure the distances from the agriculture building to the new administration/science building, from the administration building to the proposed FED offices and from the proposed FED offices to the new library.

Mr. Zoegar, IT Manager/FED, told Mr. Swee that the present IT system that BWI is connected to can't provide the internet services DAI needs and that the satellite they are connected to is seven years old. They are presently using a shared connection 1:10 of 512 which means they just have 50 kbs to operate with. They were told by Power Tech that their connections were up to 512 kbs. which is not the case. His recommendation is for Power Tech to be replaced with either CellCom or WAT.

The VES informed Mr. Swee that he will travel back to BWI to sit with him and the Principal to develop a thorough plan of action for the agriculture department to be submitted to FED. FED is still interested in having an office on the BWI Campus. Mr. Swee informed FED that the enrollment for the regular program of the agriculture department is 290 (87 females and 203 males) and for the accelerated program, the enrollment is 138 (32 females and 106 males).

On April 18, 2012 the VES traveled to BWI to work with the administration of BWI to develop the plan of action for the agriculture department, the internship program, the school's library and the proposed BED's office. The VES worked with Mr. Swee and Rev. Walker on the plan of action from April 18 - 20, 2012. On April 21, 2012 the VES sat with the Principal to discuss the draft of the action plan which he approved after his inputs. Attached is the draft action plan.

Outstanding activities:

- The appraisal of the curriculum of BWI.
- Adoption of the action plan.
- The appraisal of curriculum at Buchanan and Nimba Community Colleges.
- Conducting a meeting with Farm Builders, BWI and FED to establish the collaboration needed to enhance BWI curriculum and training strategies.

BUILDING LOCAL HUMAN CAPACITY: CREATING CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE APRIL 20, 2012

During the Vocational Education Specialist's discussion with the Principal and Head of the Agriculture Department of BWI, they concluded that the specific needs of BWI that will help make it a Center of Excellence are as follow:

No	ITEMS	Qty.	Responsibility Center - BWI	Responsibility Center -FED	Responsibility Center - STAKEHOLDERS	Timeline
1.0	Agriculture Department's Office					
1.1	Desktop	3		✓		May-June

	computer					
1.2	Printer	2		✓	✓	May-June
1.3	Scanner	1		✓		May-June
1.4	Cabinets	2		✓		May-June
1.5	Air conditioner	3		✓		May-June
1.6	Overhead fans	3		✓		May-June
1.7	Tile for office floors	As required	✓			May-June
1.8	IT System	As required		✓		May
1.9	Maintenance of IT system				✓	May-Sept.
1.10	Additional classroom space		✓			May-Aug.
1.11	Water fountain	1	✓			?
1.12	Desks for offices	2	✓			?
1.13	Regular current (fuel)			✓		May-June
2.0	Animal science					
2.1	Cattle barn		✓		✓	May-July
2.2	Dipper		✓			May-July
2.3	New pipes for pig house water system		✓			May-July
2.4	Security for pig house		✓		✓	May-July
2.5	Poultry building					
2.5.1	New screen		✓			May-July

2.5.2	Renovation of Brooding room		✓		✓	May-July
2.5.3	Restocking of poultry house		✓		✓	?
2.6	Shredder for compost making	1		✓		May-July
2.7	Soil test kit	5		✓		May-June
2.8	PH meter	7		✓		May-June
2.9	Power tiller	2		✓		May-July
2.10	Tractor	1			✓	May-Sept.
3.0	Internship Program of BWI					
3.1	Vehicle	1			✓	May-Sept.
3.2	Photo copier	1		✓		May-June
3.3	Computer	1		✓		May-June
3.4	Printer for computer	1		✓		May-June
3.5	Camera	2	✓			May-June
3.6	Accommodation for students				✓	May-July
3.7	Remuneration for students				✓	May-July
4.0	FED's Office Space	2 Rooms				
4.1	Iron door	1	✓			May-June
4.2	Window glasses		✓			May-June
4.3	Generator hour (Fuel)	4hrs. per day		✓		May-June
4.4	Air conditioner	2		✓		May-June
4.5	Overhead Fans	2		✓		May-June
4.6	Generator running cost		✓	✓		May-Sept.
5.0	Library					
5.1	IT System			✓		May-June
5.2	Training for IT Personnel			✓		May-Sept.
5.3	Restoration of BWI Radio Station		✓		✓	May-Sept.

TRAINING CONDUCTED

Achievements

During the quarter, we trained a total of 93 people (34 men and 59 women) in the following subject areas:

- A two days Business Skills Training for Farmer Associations in Gbarnga Bong County from January 203, 2012. Total number of participants 29 (18 female and 11 male).
- On April 4-5 2012, a two days Business Management Skills Training for SMEs in the Cassava Value Chain with the National Cassava Sector at the Royal Hotel in Sinkor Monrovia. Total number of participants 24 (10 female and 14 male)
- Three FED Extension Agents were trained on crop planning, input procurement and testing of soil water to determine available nutrients in the soil and similar training was provided to two of the rainy season vegetable groups (Mount Barclay and Cocoa factory Communities) benefitting 40 farmers (31 females and 9 males).

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Agricultural Economist, Ray Greer arrived to Monrovia on Wed April 4 from New Zealand, and started work in the FED office on Thursday April 5 with introduction to office staff and briefing on the status of the baseline survey and M&E operations.
- Prepared an outline of the baseline survey report and wrote-up the introductory chapters and explanation of the methodology used for the survey.
- Discussed M&E matters and revision of key indicators with the M&E Specialist and other specialists.
- Continued to develop monitoring tools for performance indicators.
- Interviewed a candidate for Nimba M&E Coordinator Position.
- Collected data related to training on horticulture production and business skills.
- Hired M&E Coordinator for Nimba County Aagon Dahn to join the M&E team on Friday, April 27, 2012.
- Completed baseline survey in Montserrado and Margibi.
- Developed monitoring tools for indicators 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 and uploaded in TAMIS.
- Interviewed M&E Coordinator candidates for Grand Bassa and Lofa County.
- Completed the consolidation and cleanup of baseline survey data in Excel.
- Prepared analysis of Baseline survey and wrote draft of report on the baseline survey.

MARKET DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Market Development Fund (MDF) Acting Manager, Jessica Stretz, arrived in Monrovia for a 4 month STTA that will focus on overseeing the day-to day operations and management of the MDF. The Acting MDF Manager will meet with potential partners and collaborate with technical staff across components to ensure disbursement and management of the funds.

TECHNICAL FIELD COORDINATION

Technical Field Program

Vegetable production at the Kakata field demonstration site continued during April. Lettuce was harvested from the demonstration site was given free of charge to the Booker Washington Institute (BWI), The Children Future Orphanage Home and the C.H. Rennie Hospital all in Kakata, Margibi County.

The lowland rice and vegetable production in Doumpa, Tappeta District, and Nimba County continued during the period ended with the following achievements:

- 474 stumps de-stumped in 2.232 Ha
- 2.232 Ha brushed
- 240 meter long main drain constructed
- 280 meter long bunds constructed
- 120 meter long head dyke constructed
- 1 hectare of the swamp fringes cleared for vegetable production
- Platform nursery constructed

Technical Program Coordination

The FED Program team including the Technical Program Coordinator, Component One Team Leader, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialists, County Managers, and the Input Supply Specialist met at the Bong County Field Office to develop an integrated approach for the technical implementation of the FED activities in the counties.

The meeting concluded with the following:

- Activities will start in Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties during the first year with the following value chains:

County	District	Value Chain
Lofa	Foyah, Voinjama & Kolahun	Rice
	Salayea & Zorzor	Cassava
Bong	Salala &Panta	Rice
	Suakoko & Kpai	Cassava
Nimba	Garr-Bain	Rice

The districts of intervention were selected based on the intensity of the activity in the area and further meetings with District Agriculture Officer in the Counties.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Administration and Logistics

Achievements

During this month, we continued to provide effective administration and logistical support to program and administrative staff, while assuring contract compliance. Highlights for this monthly from April 1-30, 2012 include:

Staff Recruitment, LTТА:

1 Enterprise Development Officer, 2 M&E Coordinators and 1 M&E Officer

- i) Eric Yeasu- Enterprise Development Officer
- ii) Aagon A. Dahn- M&E Coordinator- Nimba
- iii) Joseph S. Morris- M&E Officer
- iv) Dexter Merchant – M&E Coordinator- Bong County
- v) Moses Jaygbah – County Manager- Lofa

Currently ongoing:

Interviews, tests, background/reference checks, and salary verifications are ongoing for the following positions:

- i) M&E Officers
- ii) Extension officers
- iii) Rice Specialist
- iv) County Managers

Mark Nolan, FED Enterprise Development Specialist, joined the Monrovia FED Team on March 20, 2012. He died unexpectedly from natural causes on April 5, 2012. The HR team and FED's COP and DCOP worked with Mark's family to repatriate his body and his belongings. Jonathan Greenham, the FED COP, attended Mark's funeral in Jamaica on April 21, 2012.

Other supporting roles:

The HR Office is working closely with other sections to organize workshops and meetings. We posted 2 advertisements for Web Content Developer and Web Developer from the ICT Units and job vacancies for Environmental Officer and Market Development Funds Specialists.

Three motorbikes were sent to two county offices. Bong received two bikes and Grand Bassa received one bike; training for the motorbike riders is ongoing.

The STТА- Capacity Development Advisor, Mrs. Mahawa Wheeler, joined FED on April 9, 2012. Mrs. Wheeler will develop a Capacity Development Strategy for the program which will be informed by best practices, lessons learned, client capacity development needs, and available training services in country.

During April, the capacity development advisor has been conducting a country review, the results of which will inform the overall strategy. A draft capacity development strategy will be available for review in May.

The IT Department performed the below tasks in two field offices, Grand Bassa and Lofa counties respectively:

- Setup Network printer
- Setup cabled and wireless router
- Setup of desktop computer
- Provided other support as required

A network printer was setup and configured to staff in Voinjama field office. Digital sending/Scanning was setup to allow staff members to scan their documents for electronic system in any of the formats: pdf, jpg, png, etc.

Our outstanding activities include the setting up of Field Offices in Nimba and Margibi Counties, and wiring both building and IT equipment in the server room in the Monrovia Office (these activities are planned to be completed in May).

TABLE(s)

Table 1: Rainy Season Vegetable Groups

No	Community/ Name	County	Land area prepared(hectare)
1	We are one, Clean Town	Montserrado	0.73
2	Better day, Gbatpamah town	Montserrado	0.61
3	Kailifidiah, Fahn Town	Montserrado	0.85
4	Togetherness, Keyamee town	Montserrado	0.81
5	Air town farmers association, Air Town	Margibi	0.73
6	Yarnwuellie, Agricultural training program	Margibi	0.40
7	True satisfaction (group one), Nyatkata	Margibi	0.40
8	True satisfaction	Margibi	0.40
9	True satisfaction	Margibi	0.40
10	Cocoa Cola	Montserrado	0.4
12	Mount Barclay, YEAR	Montserrado	0.80
13	Wohn, Gibi	Mrgibi	0.61
14	Gbarlin Women Resource center	Margibi	0.4
Total			7.54